

MICHAEL CURLEY

THE NOMINATION OF FRANCIS X. SEELOS  
FOR THE SEE OF PITTSBURGH

SUMMARIUM.

Mense aprili 1860 Exc.mus Michael O'Connor resignationem suam a Sede episcopali de Pittsburgh Cardinali Alexandro Barnabò, S. Congreg. de Prop. Fide praefecto, praesentavit ratione infirmae valetudinis. In eadem epistula, consentiente Exc.mo Francisco Kenrick, archiepiscopo de Baltimore, tres candidatos pro successione proposuit: Franciscum Xav. Seelos CSSR, Michaellem Domenec CM, et Guillelmum Dolan, sacerdotem saecularem.

De P.e Seelos (\*11 I 1819 Füssen, Bayern; prof. 16 V 1844 Baltimore; sac. 22 XII 1844 Baltimore), cuius nomen primum ponitur, dedit testimonium eloquens: dicitur homo singularis sanctitatis, qui admirationem omnium, cleri et populi, Germanorum et Hibernorum sibi devinxerat. - In epistula diei 6 IV 1860 ad Card. Barnabò etiam Exc.mus Kenrick commendavit P.em Seelos tamquam universaliter aestimatum propter pietatem, humanitatem exercitiumque omnium virtutum.

Abdicatio Exc.mi O'Connor Romae accepta fuit; sed propositio candidatorum pro successione in forma canonica a consilio episcoporum Provinciae ecclesiasticae de Baltimore facienda erat. - In consultatione habita die 5 VII P. Seelos propositus non est ut candidatus, eo quod — uti notatur in actis — clerus ei aversus erat maxime propter originem eius germanicam, quamquam explicitis verbis agnoscebantur eius virtutes. A candidatis prius ab Exc.mo O'Connor propositis retenti fuerunt alii duo, scil. Domenec et Dolan, addito tertio Tobia Mullen, sacerdote saeculari ex dioecesi de Pittsburgh.

Quando P. Seelos audivit personam suam propositam fuisse pro Sede de Pittsburgh, initio hos rumores ut serios considerare recusavit; iis tamen non remittentibus timor eum invasit, ne quidquam veritatis continerent. Ut periculum talis nominationis averteret, mense septembri 1860 libellum supplicem Summo Pontifici misit. Etiam Rev.mo Patri Superiori Generali Nicolao Mauron scripsit, enumerans omnia quae contra suam electionem militabant, atque implorans eius auxilium.

Die 9 VIII 1860 P. Mauron litteras de re dedit Cardinali Barnabò, in quibus P.em Seelos descripsit ut religiosum vere exemplarem cum magno

zelo in campo Ecclesiae laborantem. Sed ipsa eius bonitas et indolis suavitas eum minime aptum redderent pro munere episcopali maxime in dioecesi de Pittsburgh, ubi gubernium in manu forti requireretur. Commemoravit etiam difficultates probabiliter orituras ex origine germanica P.is Seelos, et in fine indicavit quod Congregati SS. Redemptoris vi voti ad recusandas omnes dignitates tenentur.

Postquam notitia de electione Exc.mi Michaelis Domenec in episcopum de Pittsburgh (18 IX 1860) P.i Seelos pervenerat, in signum gratitudinis et laetitiae studentibus sibi commissis diem recreationis dedit in festo S.i Stanislai (13 XI) atque sinceras gratias egit P.i Mauron pro sua intercessione (31 XII 1860).

A. S.

A little known chapter in the life of the saintly Redemptorist, Father Francis X. Seelos, took place in the spring and summer of 1860. He was nominated by Bishop Michael O'Connor of Pittsburgh, a choice approved by Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore, as one of the three candidates to be O'Connor's successor in the See of Pittsburgh. The occasion for such a nomination occurred when Bishop O'Connor, the Irish-born prelate of the diocese in western Pennsylvania, after seventeen years of splendid administration, desired for reasons of health to resign from his post as Bishop of Pittsburgh (1).

Francis Xavier Seelos, was born in 1819 at Fuessen, Bavaria, after which he studied at the Gymnasium at Augsburg, where he was a top-ranking student. In 1839, he matriculated at the University of Munich where he had as his professors some of the best scholars of the day, among them, the renowned Joseph Görres and Doctor Streber. Completing his study of philosophy in 1841, he enrolled among the students of theology at the same University that fall. His first year saw him studying dogmatic theology under the equally well-known professors, Stadelbauer, Herb, Haneberg, Reitmeyer and Doellinger.

Expressing a desire to become a Redemptorist in 1842, he transferred to their foundation at Altötting in December of the same year. The following spring, he sailed across the Atlantic arriving in America in April 1843. He made his novitiate at St.

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(1) Francis E. Tourscher, O.S.A., *The Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence, 1830-62* (Philadelphia, 1920), 438-39, Francis P. Kenrick to Peter Richard Kenrick, [Baltimore?], April 13, 1860.

James', Baltimore, and was professed a Redemptorist in May, 1844. He was ordained a priest in December of that year.

After several months of parish work in St. James', Baltimore, he was transferred to St. Philomena's Church, Pittsburgh, which then had for its rector, Venerable John Neumann. For six years he labored as a subject with an all-out zeal in the Steel City (2). After serving as Rector of St. Philomena's from 1851 to 1854 (3), he was promoted to the office of Rector of the flourishing St. Alphonsus Church, Baltimore. When a lung hemorrhage threatened to cut short his life (4), he was transferred in 1857 to St. Mary's, Annapolis, for a month, and then made Prefect of Students and Rector at the Redemptorist Seminary at Cumberland, Maryland (5). He was in that office when his name quite unexpectedly came up in 1860 as a possible Bishop of Pittsburgh.

Michael O'Connor was then but fifty years of age and he had distinguished himself both in Europe and in America for his services to the Church. Born in Cobh, County Cork, Ireland, in 1810, he had been educated at the Urban College of Propaganda in Rome, Italy, where he was ordained on June 11, 1833. He served as Vice Rector of the Irish College in Rome and as a member of the faculty of the Urban College of Propaganda for the next year. From 1834 until the year 1839 he labored in pastoral work in Ireland.

Coming to America he was appointed by Bishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Philadelphia as Rector of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, an office which he held for two years. Made Vicar General of the Diocese of Philadelphia in 1841, he was raised two years later to the office of bishop of the newly erected See of Pittsburgh in the western portion of Pennsylvania (6). As its bishop for ten years until 1853 he labored magnificently to organize the new diocese and with such success and public acclaim that the Roman Visitor, Archbishop Gaetano Bedini, appraised him

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(2) Peter Zimmer, C.S.S.R., *Leben und Wirken des hochwürdigen P. Franz Xaver Seelos aus der Congregation des Allerheil. Erlösers* (New York, 1887), 9-30; Joseph Wuest, C.S.S.R., *Annales Congregationis SSmi Redemptoris Provinciae Americanae* (cited hereafter as Wuest, *Annales*) V, 1 (Boston, 1918), pp. 228-33.

(3) Bernard Beck, C.S.S.R., *Goldenes Jubiläum des Wirkens der Redemptoristenväter an der St. Philomena Kirche in Pittsburgh und Umgebung* (Ilchester, Md., 1889), 192-211.

(4) Wuest, *Annales*, III, 1 (Ilchester, Md., 1899), 48-52, 123-26, 212-15, 281-85.

(5) *Ibid.*, 305; RABP, *Chronicle of the House of Studies, Cumberland, Md.*, 37.

(6) Michael J. Curley, C.S.S.R., *Venerable John Neumann* (Washington, D.C., 1952), 98, 419, n. 16, 17.

as the most influential in the hierarchy of the United States after Archbishop John Hughes of New York (7).

Because Bishop O'Connor wished to divide his diocese so that it could be more effectively administered, he proposed in the year 1853 to cut off the upper northeast part of it to form the Diocese of Erie, Pennsylvania. To make certain of this division, he proposed that he himself should leave Pittsburgh and become the first Bishop of Erie (8). The arrangement went through, much to the chagrin of Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick of Baltimore, who believed that this transferring of Bishop O'Connor to the See of Erie was harmful to the best interest of the Church in America. Bishop O'Connor went to Erie as its first bishop and remained there eight months when the pleas of the American bishops to have him return to Pittsburgh were heard, and he was again transferred back to the Steel City. Now within a diocese of smaller limits and less exhausting demands, the executive talents of Bishop Michael O'Connor began to shine with even greater effectiveness. During his regime at Pittsburgh, he built a new seminary, constructed a new cathedral, recruited many priests from abroad, fought for the independence of the Church and for the right of the Church to own property; he spoke out vigorously for Catholic schools and won the status of a leading churchman in the country (9).

Nevertheless, spasms of ill-health, particularly after 1856, awakened in him the idea of resigning (10). On various occasions during the next four years he sought the appointment of a coadjutor to assist him, or to have another bishop appointed for Pittsburgh, only to find the plan fail him (11). In 1859 he took

(7) Peter Guilday, « Gaetano Bedini », *United States Catholic Historical Society, Records and Studies*, XXIII (1933), 166; James F. Connelly, *Visit of Gaetano Bedini to the United States of America* (Rome, 1960), 211.

(8) Tourscher, *Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence*, 355-56, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, n.p., September 10, 1853; *ibid.*, 356-58, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, Baltimore, October 17, 1853; Archives of the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana (cited hereafter as AUND), Cincinnati Papers, II-4-1, F. P. Kenrick to [Purcell], Baltimore, September 10, 1853; Joseph B. Code, *Dictionary of the American Hierarchy* (New York, 1940), 262-63.

(9) For O'Connor's first years as a bishop, see Thomas T. McAvoy, C.S.C., « The Catholic Minority in Early Pittsburg; The First Bishop: Michael O'Connor », *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, LXXII (1961), 67-83.

(10) Tourscher, *Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence*, 399-400, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, Baltimore 3, December 3, 1856.

(11) Father John Byrne of St. Matthew's, Washington, was sought as an auxiliary, Archives of the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide, Rome, Italy (cited hereafter as APF), Acta, vol. 221, f. 296<sup>v</sup>, Francis P. Kenrick, John McGill and John Neumann to the Cardinal Prefect, Baltimore, May 4, 1857; Owen B. Corrigan, « Chronology of the Catholic Hierarchy in the United States », *The Catholic Historical Review*, III (1917), 24. Edward Purcell, brother of Archbishop John B. Purcell of Cincinnati, refused the

a trip abroad in an elusive quest of health. During his absence he had appointed his own brother, James O'Connor, then a priest of the Diocese of Philadelphia, as administrator of Pittsburgh during his absence. The arrangement proved none too happy because some Pittsburgh priests resented the outsider as their interim superior (12). With distress of soul and weakening physical powers, Michael O'Connor determined to resign his See in the spring of 1860.

He wrote to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Alexander Barnabò, informing him that he was again offering him his resignation as the Bishop of Pittsburgh. The bishop explained that he had endeavored to put off this by having his own brother, James O'Connor, act as administrator since June of the preceeding year. It was evident, however, that such an arrangement could not endure since James O'Connor was a priest of the Diocese of Philadelphia and not of Pittsburgh. A number of the clergy of the diocese did not like the idea. Bishop O'Connor did not blame his brother, since he felt the same outcome would have resulted if any other had been placed as interim administrator in Pittsburgh. Some believed he could continue to have an administrator in his place while he was recuperating in the diocese. Bishop O'Connor said it would be impossible to remain in the diocese and at the same time delegate the jurisdiction to another, because those who disagreed with the delegated priest would be appealing over the latter's head to him. For that reason, he begged the Holy See to accept his resignation because of his own physical infirmity and because the situation called for another in his place.

Bishop O'Connor proposed the names of three priests who would be suitable successors in the See of Pittsburgh: Father Francis Seelos, a Redemptorist; Father Michael Domenec, a Vincentian; and Father William Dolan, a parish priest in the City of Baltimore. He outlined the qualifications of each. The letter to Propaganda informed the Cardinal Prefect that these names had been submitted to the Archbishop of Baltimore and he had agreed that any one of them would make a suitable bishop for the See in western Pennsylvania. The Pittsburgh prelate placed the name of Father Seelos first on the list and he wrote of him:

office, Tourscher, *Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence*, 414-16, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, [Baltimore?], November 30, 1858. O'Connor even entertained the notion of having Bishop James Wood made Bishop of Pittsburgh, while still retaining the coadjutorship of Philadelphia, Baltimore Cathedral Archives, 30 y 24, Michael O'Connor to F. P. Kenrick, Philadelphia, July 11, 1859.

(12) APF, Acta, vol. 224, f. 454-456<sup>v</sup>, James Keogh to the Cardinal Prefect, Pittsburgh, July 15, 1860.

Father Seelos is a German by birth but he has spent many years in this country. For some years he was superior of the house of his Congregation in Pittsburgh; then he was superior in the City of Baltimore; and later he was superior and professor in the house of studies of his Congregation at Cumberland in the same diocese. This Father is a man of truly singular sanctity. While here, he won the admiration of all. I have heard various Irish priests speak of him with great esteem. Some have said that he continually reminds them of Saint Aloysius, and it is not a profanation to say that his piety does not appear inferior to the piety of that paragon. He knows the English language, but not perfectly; nevertheless, he has sufficient command of it to speak and preach with vigor. He has great strength of character notwithstanding the sweetness of his piety; he was well beloved by all classes of people. He exercised the sacred ministry both among the English and among the Germans and always with great fruit and acclaim... I have no doubt that his administration will be no less blessed by heaven for his piety which our population of every nationality accepts.

In closing the latter Bishop O'Connor said :

If the Holy Father wishes to select Father Seelos, it will be necessary to place him under obedience to accept it. His humility and his sense of devotion to his religious order will certainly make him refuse, if he is not obliged to accept (13).

Writing from Baltimore at the same time, Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick communicated to the Cardinal Prefect the desire of Michael O'Connor to resign his office, pointing out the difficulties James O'Connor had as administrator. It was the archbishop's opinion that Bishop Michael O'Connor had justifiable grounds for asking to resign his See. Kenrick made a change however, in the order of the names proposed as his successor placing Father James Dolan second on the list and Michael Domenec in the third place. Of Father Seelos he said that the thirty-nine-year-old Bavarian-born German had worked at Pittsburgh, Baltimore and other places of the United States and was praised by all for his piety, his humanity, and all the virtues. The Baltimore prelate declared that Seelos knew the English language very well; therefore, he was not unacceptable to either Germans or Irish.

The archbishop had informed the other bishops of the country and had asked them to give their views concerning the candidates for Pittsburgh to the Holy See (14).

(13) *Ibid.*, Acta, vol. 224, ff. 444-46, Michael O'Connor to the Cardinal Prefect, Pittsburgh, April (n.d.), 1860.

(14) *Ibid.*, Acta, 224, ff. 446-447, Francis Patrick Kenrick to the Cardinal Prefect, Baltimore, April 6, 1860.

The first to do so was Bishop Richard Vincent Whelan of Wheeling, the western part of Virginia. His account of the three showed, as he said, little first hand acquaintance with them. However, he pointed out that Father Seelos was a German, of that nationality which does not easily conciliate itself with others. He likewise said he did not know whether Seelos spoke English well or not. Because of his not knowing any of the proposed candidates well, he did not signify a personal choice (15).

Bishop John McGill of Richmond wrote from that city on April 10th that he was not acquainted with Father Seelos or with Father Domenec, although he knew Father Dolan. This last priest seemed to him to be a man of very good manners and endowed with a number of virtues. However, he questioned his learning and the sharpness of his intellect, though he believed that a more qualified administrator for temporal things would be difficult to find (16).

However, Bishop Josue Young of Erie said that he did not believe that the interests of religion in the Diocese of Pittsburgh would be served by the abdication of Bishop O'Connor. He believed that the diocese could be governed for some time as it had been in the past year by the brother of the bishop, James O'Connor. In Youngs' opinion, the latter did well and his work was praiseworthy. For that reason it appeared to him better for the faithful and more pleasing to the clergy to retain Bishop O'Connor rather than impose a new bishop from an outside diocese (17).

The last to give a report at this time was Bishop Augustine Verot, the Vicar Apostolic of St. Augustine, Florida. Bishop Verot said that he knew only one of the priests whose names were proposed, Father James Dolan, who studied in the Baltimore seminary when Verot was teaching there. Verot declared that he was obliged to tell the Cardinal Prefect that James Dolan knew very little Latin and he had not been able to recite his lessons in the Latin language in the seminary. For this reason he had been scarcely admitted to ordination by the professors and directors of the seminary. He had heard nothing reprehensible concerning Father Dolan's conduct, but beyond this, Verot said regretfully, he knew nothing particular to recommend in him. Father Dolan

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(15) *Ibid.*, Acta, 224, ff. 450-450<sup>o</sup>, Richard Vincent Whelan to the Cardinal Prefect, Wheeling, April 7, 1860.

(16) *Ibid.*, Acta, 224, ff. 449<sup>o</sup>-450, McGill to the Cardinal Prefect, Richmond, April 10, 1860.

(17) *Ibid.*, Acta, 224, ff. 451, Young to the Cardinal Prefect, Erie, April 27, 1860.

was a tall man, said Verot, and he was skilled in popular eloquence which gave him prestige among his Irish countrymen. Verot believed, however, that Father Dolan engaged in political controversy more than appeared judicious and opportune (18).

The reply of Propaganda to Bishop O'Connor's letter, asking that his resignation be accepted, and that one of the three candidates he named, did not settle the question. O'Connor's resignation was accepted, but the recommendation of candidates for the See of Pittsburgh was to be made formally by the assembled bishops of the Province of Baltimore, and not merely by Bishop O'Connor, or by Bishop O'Connor and Bishop Francis P. Kenrick alone (19). Archbishop Francis P. Kenrick now informed the bishops of the province of this formal meeting to be held in the archbishop's house on July 5th (20) and he also appointed James O'Connor administrator of the diocese (21).

Meanwhile, a number of the priests in the Diocese of Pittsburgh stirred up opposition to the possible nomination of Father Seelos. One priest believed Bishop O'Connor should write to Rome to withdraw his support of Seelos (22). The endeavor to stop the possible election of the Bavarian-born Seelos was not a personal matter. Aversion to the naming of a German bishop for Pittsburgh was deeper than this. Indeed, the question of the lack of harmony between the Germans and the Irish in Pittsburgh had deeper roots. Bishop Michael O'Connor had had some difficulties with some German Fathers earlier in his career and from that difficulty had stemmed, among non-Germans, a hostile attitude toward the possibility of a German-born bishop.

Adequately to analyze the wide ramifications of this juxtaposition of ideas would take us too far afield in this brief article, but what may safely be said is that the possibility of a German

(18) *Ibid.*, Acta, 224, f. 450<sup>v</sup>, Verot to the Cardinal Prefect, St. Augustine, Florida, May 26, 1860.

(19) Pittsburgh Diocesan Archives, AD 1730-1900, document 840, Francis Patrick Kenrick to Thomas Heyden, Baltimore, June 18, 1860. See *Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence*, 438-39, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, [Baltimore?], April 13, 1860; *ibid.*, 439-40, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, n.p., n.d.

(20) APF., Acta, vol. 224, ff. 448-49, Patrick Lynch to the Cardinal Prefect, Baltimore, July 5, 1860.

(21) *Ut supra*, n. 19, Kenrick to Thomas Heyden, Baltimore, June 18, 1860; *ibid.*, document 847, James O'Connor to the Diocesan Counselors, Pittsburgh, June 29, 1860.

(22) *Ibid.*, document 844, Rev. Thomas Tuigg to Heyden, Altoona, June 23, 1860; APF, Acta, vol. 224, ff. 452<sup>v</sup>-454, Michael O'Connor to the Cardinal Prefect, Pittsburgh, July 17, 1860.

bishop in Pittsburgh at that time could easily awaken misgivings, apart from any consideration of the personality of the individual concerned (23). The very fact that under these circumstances Bishop Michael O'Connor first proposed the name of Father Seelos as his successor indicates more than anything else that he could rise above the prevalent sentiment to give a high appraisal to an individual German-born priest.

Moreover, some Pittsburgh priests began to advance the name of another, Father Tobias Mullen, as suitable for Pittsburgh. Particularly favoring the latter was, likewise, Richard Vincent Whelan, the Bishop of Wheeling. The bringing forward of the name of Tobias Mullen was not pleasing to the Bishop of Pittsburgh. Previously he had given his approbation to this priest, but as time went on he had lost confidence in him. However, Bishop O'Connor did not at this time bring forth any official objection to the name of Tobias Mullen, since his name had not been sent to Rome as one of those who might succeed him (24).

The agitation among the priests in Pittsburgh resulted in their asking that the consultors of the diocese be heard in regard to the choice of the next Bishop of Pittsburgh. This was not strange because in the First Plenary Council of 1852, and particularly in the Eighth Provincial Council of the Baltimore Province in 1855, the idea of seeking such suggestions had been brought up and had been approved (25). Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick directed the consultors of the diocese to submit a list of their preferences for the See of Pittsburgh. The agitation of the priests in Pittsburgh and the opposition to Father Seelos seemed to have awakened a change of sentiment in Michael O'Connor, for he wrote to one of the consultors :

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(23) The literature on the German-Irish question is extensive. The rights or wrongs of the question were not all on one side. See Colman J. Barry, O.S.B., *The Catholic Church and German Americans* (Milwaukee, 1953), 16-18; Theodore Roemer O.F.M. Cap., *The Ludwig-Missions-Verein and the Church in the United States, 1838-1918* (Washington, D.C. 1933), 16-19; Willibald Mathäser, O.S.B. (Ed.), *Bonifaz Wimmer O.S.B. und König Ludwig I von Bayern* (Munich 1938), 30-33, Wimmer to King Louis I of Bavaria, Youngstown, September 4, 1851; Willibald Mathäser, O.S.B., *Der Ludwig-Missionsverein in der Zeit König Ludwigs I von Bayern* (Munich, 1939), 162-76; Michael J. Curley, C.S.S.R., *Venerable John Neumann* (Washington, 1952), 98-99, 192-93. For the views prevailing in Pittsburgh during those years see, APF, Acta, vol. 218 (1854) ff. 454, 455, Francis Veelos [Seelos], C.S.S.R., and Laurence Holzer, C.S.S.R., to the Cardinal Prefect of Propaganda, Pittsburgh, October 13, 1853; APF, Acta, 220 (1858), ff. 101, 101<sup>v</sup>, Thomas Heyden to the Secretary of Propaganda Fide, [Bedford?], November 10, 1856.

(24) APF., Acta, 224, ff. 452<sup>v</sup>-454, Michael O'Connor to the Cardinal Prefect, Pittsburgh, July 17, 1860.

(25) See Curley, *Venerable John Neumann*, 270-71.

I have no doubt that Rev. Seelos' name will be set aside. A candid opinion should be given by the consultors in such a way as to command respect and not to be pointed to as selfishness by our Irish priests. Germans are not best suited for our Sees, but no general rule can be given (26).

The administrator, Father James O'Connor, now invited the consultors to forward their views to the archbishop before the meeting of the assembled bishops. They were to state their preference for one of the three on the list or for any not named on it (27).

The meeting was held in Archbishop Francis Patrick Kenrick's home on July 5th as scheduled. Richard Vincent Whelan, Bishop of Wheeling; John McGill, Bishop of Richmond; Josua Young, Bishop of Erie; James Wood, Bishop of Philadelphia; and Patrick Lynch, Bishop of Charleston, met. Bishop Verot was absent and, naturally, Bishop Michael O'Connor was absent since he had resigned. In virtue of the Apostolic Brief Archbishop Patrick Kenrick had asked letters containing their views from the Administrator of Savannah, Peter Whelan, and likewise from James O'Connor. The meeting was held at noon and, after prayers to the Holy Ghost, the discussion began.

The names of the priests that had been sent previously to Rome: Father Francis Seelos, Father Michael Domenec, and Father James Dolan, were brought forward as selected by Bishop O'Connor. The names of Father Thomas Heyden and of Tobias Mullen were sent in by private letters of the clergy. The Bishop of Wheeling proposed that the Irishman, Tobias Mullen should be placed on the list of the *terna* because he was acceptable to the priests of Pittsburgh and had spent sixteen years in the diocese. The Bishop of Charleston proposed James Dolan because of his integrity of life and his skill and long experience in conducting affairs. The Bishop of Philadelphia, James Wood, proposed Michael Domenec a Spaniard who, he said, spoke English very well and was skilled in carrying out affairs. The name that was not proposed in this assembly was that of Francis X. Seelos, and the reason given in the acts of the meeting was that, while Father Seelos was distinguished for many virtues, the clergy were opposed to him and besides the English language was not his vernacular. The three

(26) Pittsburgh Diocesan Archives, AD 1730-1900, document 843, Michael O'Connor to Rev. Thomas Heyden, Loretto, June 22, 1860.

(27) *Ibid.*, document 847, James O'Connor to the Diocesan Consultors, Pittsburgh, June 29, 1860.

names proposed therefore were different from those that Bishop O'Connor had proposed with Archbishop Patrick Kenrick's approval (28).

The Archbishop of Baltimore himself was not entirely in accord with joint opinion of the bishops of his province. He wrote the Cardinal Prefect on July 13, 1860, that he did not believe that Tobias Mullen should be appointed because of his former difficulty with the Administrator of the Diocese of Pittsburgh, James O'Connor. The archbishop did not speak about Michael Domenec since many were opposed to a clergyman whose native language was not English, but he did advert to the fact that this Father Domenec was worthy of the episcopal office. In the opinion of Francis Patrick Kenrick, James Dolan seemed, at that time, to be the one preferred (29).

The adverse opinion of the Archbishop of Baltimore regarding Father Tobias Mullen was quickly seconded by Bishop Emeritus Michael O'Connor, who wrote a long letter to the Cardinal Prefect on July 17, 1860, giving his reasons for his objection to the naming of this priest.

Bishop O'Connor explained that he himself had not been in attendance at the meeting of the bishops of the province at Baltimore on July 5, but he had asked the archbishop to inform him if any other names were recommended by the assembled group other than those he had previously sent (30).

Reinforcing the adverse opinion against the nomination of Father Tobias Mullen for Pittsburgh, was a letter of Father James Keogh, an alumnus of Propaganda College, sent to the Prefect of Propaganda on July 15, 1860. Father Keogh outlined at great length the difficulties that have arisen in the Diocese of Pittsburgh during the absence of Bishop Michael O'Connor, and even before that. These concerned certain financial obligations which some of the priests had not complied with. Because of the attitude of Father Mullen, Father Keogh had a doubt about suggesting his name for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. He gave his

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(28) APF., Acta, vol. 224, ff. 447<sup>v</sup>-448, Archbishop Francis P. Kenrick and Bishops Whelan, McGill, Young, Wood, and Lynch to the Cardinal Prefect, Baltimore, July 5, 1860; APF., Acta, vol. 224, ff. 448<sup>v</sup>-449, « Acta Coetus Ecclesiastici habiti, Baltimore, July 5, 1860 », signed by Patrick Lynch, secretary of the meeting; see *Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence*, 445-47, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, Baltimore, July 13, 1860.

(29) APF., Acta, vol. 224, ff. 449-449<sup>v</sup>, Francis P. Kenrick to the Cardinal Prefect, Baltimore, July 13, 1860.

(30) APF., Acta, vol. 224, ff. 452<sup>v</sup>-454, Michael O'Connor to the Cardinal Prefect, Pittsburgh, July 17, 1860.

objections candidly in a running six-page letter, though he wrote with restraint (31).

As the weeks rolled on other letters arrived in Rome. The Administrator, James O'Connor, who had passed up the invitation to assist at the meeting of the bishops in Baltimore for prudential reasons, wrote his views. He had not attended the meeting on July 5th he said, first because he believed his presence at the meeting would not be necessary or useful. Moreover his brother, Bishop Michael O'Connor, had told him that no name of a priest of the Diocese of Pittsburgh would be presented to Rome. Since the administrator had advised the consultors to mention whomsoever they wished, the situation would have been embarrassing for him. Likewise, because he knew some priests had opposed him in the administration of the diocese, he felt that their objections to him in regard to the Diocese of Pittsburgh would come out in the meeting; and he had no desire to know the names of those who were against his administration.

Taking up the questions of the nomination of Tobias Mullen, Father O'Connor remarked that none of the prelates who had been present at the meeting objected to the name of Father Mullen. However, he declared, Father Keogh had let him see in part the letter he had written to the Cardinal Prefect objecting to Father Mullen. O'Connor said he agreed with it.

In the opinion of James O'Connor, Father Mullen did not have the science, nor the prudence nor the courtesy, the esteemed manners, which are required for the episcopacy. At one time, he did believe Father Mullen a very exemplary priest. However, of late years he changed his opinion after Father Mullen became involved in some diocesan difficulties concerning jurisdiction. This, he believed, would indicate a weakness of character. Nevertheless, James O'Connor declared that he was ready to give his full allegiance to Father Mullen or to anyone who would be named bishop (32).

Bishop James Wood of Philadelphia wrote in early August of the same year concerning the nomination. He said flatly that he believed Father Mullen would be of doubtful utility because he was head of a party against the prelate of that diocese. He favored the naming of Father Dolan who had experience in temporal

(31) *Ibid.*, vol. 224, ff. 454-457, James Keogh to the Prefect of Propaganda, Pittsburgh, July 15, 1860.

(32) *Ibid.*, vol. 224, ff. 457-458, James O'Connor to the Cardinal Prefect, Pittsburgh, July 22, 1860.

affairs, zeal, and sufficient wisdom. Moreover, Wood believed Father Dolan would be able to conciliate those of different opinions in the diocese. As for the Redemptorist Father Seelos, mentioned at least once in the recommendations to Rome, Bishop Wood said :

His election would not be taken well by the clergy and the people. At any rate, if he becomes bishop it will please his Reverend confreres. Although he is a man of piety and zeal he seems more adapted to live in a convent among his religious brethren than to live in the world and govern a diocese (33).

The Redemptorist concerned in all this, Father Francis X. Seelos, meanwhile went on very happily with his students over whom he was prefect, and in the classroom, teaching his favorite subject, dogmatic theology (34). He mysteriously left the Cumberland seminary on April 16 to go to Baltimore where, the chonicer said, he had been invited for some work or was to do some business (35). He returned soon after. The rumor that Father Seelos was on the list of three possible candidates for the See of Pittsburgh soon reached his ears. He believed such a burden would crush him. On July 21, 1860, he wrote to his folks at home :

The Bishop of Pittsburgh has resigned his Diocese because of age and impaired health. Someone has chosen me as the first candidate for the See of Pittsburgh. Archbishop O'Connor has too high an opinion of me, and if it depended on him alone, I would not know how to escape this burden. The archbishop has now called all his bishops together and they have selected their candidates. I do not know whether I am on the second list. You, my dear ones, please get together and pray earnestly that I will be spared this cross. I would have a very difficult position and relationship, especially with the Irish and American clergy of the diocese. They are absolutely opposed to a German bishop and those who love me as Father Seelos would oppose me as bishop. There are other things of which you good people at home have no concept (36).

In reality, as shown above, his name had not been placed on the list by the assembled bishops. In spite of this, the fact that Bishop Michael O'Connor was opposed to Father Mullen and

(33) APF., Acta, vol. 224, ff. 458-458<sup>v</sup>, Wood to Reverendissimo Monsignore [Bedini?], Philadelphia, August 3, 1860.

(34) Wuest, *Annales*, IV, 1 (Boston, 1914), 171, 174.

(35) RABP., Chronicle of the House of Studies, Cumberland, Md., 71 under date of April 16, 1860.

(36) RABP., III, Francis X. Seelos, Seelos to Mother, Sisters and Brothers (copy), Cumberland, Md., July 21, 1860.

that James Dolan, in a later opinion of the Archbishop of Baltimore, did not seem suited for the office, Francis Seelos was still in the running. As late as mid-September, 1860, Francis Patrick Kenrick believed that either the Redemptorist or Michael Domenec would be the choice. The people, he said, praised Father Seelos very highly (37).

Francis Seelos could not believe they were serious about his becoming a bishop. When the rumor was repeated often and continued to be repeated, he began to fear that there might be some truth in it. Alarmed, he wrote to the Holy Father to ward off any such appointment. It was the finest downgrading a man could give himself. He wrote :

In the first place, I have never been conversant with public and legal affairs and I have never been in charge of temporal concerns. I kept myself away from those things that regard law. Such matters must be known by a bishop, especially by a bishop in America.

Second, I think it would be very difficult to find anyone qualified among the priests of the diocese who would look after these things. Even if one could be found, it would be impossible to have him at one's side everywhere and at all times. Besides, in most difficult cases, the bishop must decide. For that reason *he himself* should be sufficiently skilled in these matters.

Third, it is absolutely necessary that a bishop have a strong mind and be altogether above human respect. He must root out what should be rooted out, build what should be built, and not fear the face of men whether they be clerics or lay people. He should defend himself and his good cause before judges and adversaries. The bishop chosen for that diocese should be as a fortified city, a pillar of iron and a wall of brass.

But who am I? I'm a nobody without any praiseworthy quality, without virtue and without experience, so that I scarcely dare to talk to even obedient subjects. I am slow in speech and slower in intelligence, without any ability to distinguish and to judge, particularly in those cases which do not admit of delay.

Because of these things most Holy Father, I beg most humbly to be freed from such a calamity (38).

When the rumor of the nomination of Father Seelos first spread, Seelos begged his mother, sisters, brothers and friends to pray for him. The students at Cumberland made a novena and Seelos promised them a recreation day if the danger were avert-

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(37) *Kenrick-Frenaye Correspondence*, 448-50, F. P. Kenrick to P. R. Kenrick, Baltimore, September 16, 1860.

(38) *AGR.*, Pr. Am. V, 3, Defuncti 1848-1875, Francis X. Seelos, Seelos to Pope Pius IX, September (Feast of Our Lady of Dolors), 1860.

ed(39). In an effort to reinforce his pleas he wrote to the Redemptorist superior general, Father Nicholas Mauron, listing what he regarded as his deficiencies and lack of capacity for any such office as bishop(40). Father Nicholas Mauron became the big ally of Seelos in escaping the office of bishop. The superior general was commanded by the Prefect of Propaganda to give his candid opinion concerning the fitness of Seelos for the position of Bishop of Pittsburgh. Mauron did so in devastating fashion.

He declared that Father Seelos was a religious of truly exemplary conduct and as such he was very useful to the Church. But, he argued, because a man is a very good religious he is not by that fact to be commended for the episcopacy. This office could be a danger both for the person himself and for the Church. Mauron did not think that Seelos should be chosen for a bishop, and he based his judgment on the following arguments.

First, Seelos was so good in his character that he could not refuse a favor. Mauron believed this goodness, although acceptable to Seelos' subjects, could degenerate into weakness and render him incapable of acting with the necessary energy.

Mauron further stated that Seelos' excessive goodness, if not to call it weakness, would thereby render him incapable of governing a diocese especially that of Pittsburgh, which by report needed a bishop of great firmness. The superior general likewise pointed out that as superior Father Seelos always had been aided in temporal affairs by another Father, a circumstance that disqualified him, in Mauron's eyes, from the office of a bishop.

The superior general next declared that Father Seelos was born in Bavaria, and this could be an occasion for causing opposition to him on a part of the Irish and American clergy. Even under Bishop O'Connor this sort of envy made that prelate restrict the Redemptorist Fathers, who were in charge of the Germans in the diocese, to twelve cases of hearing confessions in English. Under such circumstances, having Father Seelos as Bishop of Pittsburgh might cause difficulties.

Lastly he pointed out Father Seelos took the vow of perseverance in the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, and

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(39) RABP., III, Francis X. Seelos, Seelos to his Mother, Sisters and Brothers, Cumberland, Md., November 14, 1860.

(40) RABP., III, Francis X. Seelos, Thaddeus Anwander, C.S.S.R., to Father Minister, St. Joseph's [Rochester, N.Y.], November 8, 1876.

because of it, he was obliged to refuse all dignities, unless otherwise commanded by the Holy See (41).

That did it. Everybody was agreed. Seelos didn't want to be bishop; his superior general didn't want him to be bishop; and some priests in Pittsburgh didn't want him to be bishop. Michael Domenec, the Vincentian, was named Bishop of Pittsburgh, September 18, 1860 (42).

When the news of the choice of Domenec arrived in America, Francis Xavier Seelos breathed a sigh of relief. He wrote and thanked his superior general for his kind action in saving him from the burden of the episcopacy (43). He also gave the students in November of that year the free day he had promised. There was a gala celebration on the feast of Saint Stanislaus. The refectory in Cumberland was decorated with flowers, with streamers and with festive signs. Everybody was happy... The students gave speeches in German and English, sang songs and gave piano recitals. Long loud applause greeted the words of the beloved prefect when he said, «I would rather be bishop of my students than Bishop of Pittsburgh» (44).

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(41) AGR., P. Am. V, 3, Defuncti 1848-1875, Francis X. Seelos, Nicholas Mauron to Cardinal Barnabo (copy), Rome, August 9, 1860; APF., Acta, vol. 224, ff. 451-452<sup>r</sup>, has a printed copy of the original.

(42) Code, *op. cit.*, 79-80, «Michael Domenec, C.M. ».

(43) AGR., P. Am. V, Defuncti 1848-1875, Francis X. Seelos, Seelos to Nicholas Mauron, Cumberland, Md., December 31, 1860.

(44) Zimmer, *op. cit.*, 210-13; *Ut supra*, n. 39.